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ABSTRACT

The results of the annual survey of state teacher testing programs in 1990 are summarized. State directors of teacher testing programs were contacted in the summer of 1990 and asked to update the data compiled in 1989 by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation. The results show that 46 states required teacher testing in 1990. Twenty-seven states use admissions tests: 17 use only commercially available tests, 5 allow colleges of education to select tests, three use only custom designed tests, and 2 use both commercially available and custom designed tests. Thirty-six states use certification tests: 27 use only commercially available tests, 7 use only custom designed tests, and 2 use both commercially available and custom designed tests. Certification tests assess basic skills (teachers' competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics) in 26 states, professional skills (teachers' abilities to teach) in 25 states, and subject knowledge (teachers' expertise in their areas of specialization) in 24 states. A table lists, for each state, the name of the test used, passing rate, and passing scores for both admission and certification tests, where appropriate. The table includes some information on coverage area (basic, professional, and/or subject) for the certification tests. A three-item list of additional reading materials is included. (TJH)

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STATE TESTING OF TEACHERS: THE 1990 REPORT

by Ruth Axman Childs & Lawrence M. Rudner, ERIC/TM

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The number of states that require school teachers to pass tests has risen dramatically in 10 years, up by more than 400 percent since 1980. Only 10 states required teacher testing for elementary and secondary schools in 1980. By 1990, that number has jumped to 46 states.

This digest summarizes the results of the latest annual survey of state teacher testing programs. State directors of teacher testing programs were contacted in the summer of 1990 and asked to update the data we had compiled in 1989.

Which Types of Tests Are Commonly Used?

States commonly use two types of tests to assess prospective teachers:

- Admissions tests: for people who apply to teacher education programs.
- Certification tests: for graduates of teacher education programs before they begin teaching.

Several states, including Colorado and Delaware, are considering or using certificate upgrade or permanence tests for veteran teachers.

Considering admissions tests and certification tests together, only four states (Alaska, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Vermont) do not currently assess or plan to assess their teachers. Also, most states rely on nationally developed tests rather than designing their own.

How Many States Use These Tests?

Admissions Tests: Twenty-seven states have now begun admissions testing. Though the tendency is for states to rely on commercially available assessment tests, the instruments are varied. Of the 27 states that now use admissions standards:

17 use only commercially available tests,
5 allow colleges of education to choose tests,
3 use only tests that are custom designed, and
2 use both commercially available and custom designed tests.

Certification Tests: Certification tests are the most common form of teacher assessment. Thirty-six states now use them. Michigan and Massachusetts plan to begin testing for certification in 1991.

As with admissions tests, states commonly use commercially available tests rather than designing their own. Of the 36 states that now use certification tests:

27 use only commercially available tests,
7 use only tests that are custom designed, and
2 use both commercially available and custom designed tests.

Certification tests assess three areas of knowledge:

Basic skills: teachers' competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics. Of the 35 states that identified the skills they test, 26 said they test basic skills.

Professional skills: teachers' abilities to teach. Twenty-five of the states reported that they test professional skills.

Subject knowledge: teachers' expertise in their areas of specialization. Twenty-four of the states said they test subject knowledge.

Some states have developed their own subject knowledge tests. To increase the circulation of these tests, eleven states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) recently formed the State Sponsored Testing Program. Each state participating in the program has agreed to allow other participating states to use its tests.

See the table on the next page for the current status of admissions and certification testing by state.

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State	Data Revised	Admissions Tests: Test[1]	Pass Rate[2]	Passing Scores[3]	Certification Tests: Test	Pass Rate	Passing Scores	Coverage: basic	prof	subj
Alabama	1989	Custom	81		–					
Alaska	1989	–			–					
Arizona	1987	PPST	79(1986)	173,172,174	Custom	78(1985)		Yes	Yes	
Arkansas	1990	PPST		170,169,171	NTE				Yes	Yes
California	1988	CBEST	77(1986)		CBEST	74(1986)		Yes		
Colorado	1990	CAT	64(1989-90)	75%ile	–					
Conn.	1989	Custom	67(1987)		NTE					Yes
Delaware	1990	–			PPST	69(1983-86)	175,175,172	Yes		
Florida	1989	SAT,ACT		40%ile	Custom	82(1980-88)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	1990	–			Custom	92(1988-89)				Yes
Hawaii	1990	–			NTE	76(1989)	647,651,648	Yes	Yes	Yes
Idaho	1988	–			NTE		646,652,648	Yes	Yes	
Illinois	1990	–			Custom	92(1988-89)		Yes		Yes
Indiana	1988	–			NTE	88	647,653,646	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa	1990	–			–					
Kansas	1990	–			PPST,NTE(PK)	97(1987)	168,168,170(642)		Yes	Yes
Kentucky	1990	ACT	80(1989)	21(Composite)	NTE	90(1989)	643,646,644	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	1990	NTE		645,644,–	NTE	90(1987)	644,645,645	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine	1989	–			NTE		649,656,648	Yes	Yes	
Maryland	1990	–			NTE		645,648,648	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mass.	1990	–			Planned for 1991					
Michigan	1990	–			Planned for 1991					
Minnesota	1990	–			PPST		173,169,172	Yes		
Mississippi	1989	COMP, NTE		170(642,647,–)	NTE		642,647,645	Yes	Yes	Yes
Missouri	1990	SAT,ACT,C-BASE		800,18,235	NTE				Yes	Yes
Montana	1990	–			NTE	92(1986)	644,648,648	Yes	Yes	
Nebraska	1990	PPST		170,171,172	PPST		170,171,172			
Nevada	1990	PPST	95(1985)	169,169,170	PPST,NTE				Yes	Yes
New Hamp.	1989	–		–						
New Jersey	1989	–			NTE					
New Mexico	1990	Misc			NTE	91(1989)	645,644,630	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	1990	–			NTE	78(1989)	650,649,646	Yes	Yes	
No. Carolina	1990	NTE	641,639,–		NTE	83(1988)	–,–,644		Yes	Yes
No. Dakota	1990	Misc		–						
Ohio	1990	–			NTE			Yes	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	1990	PPST			Custom	88(1982-89)				Yes
Oregon	1990	CBEST	77(1986)	Suspended 5/21/90	CBEST	80(1986)	Suspended 5/21/90		Yes	
Pennsylvania	1990	–			NTE,Custom		644,646,643	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	1990	–			NTE		649,657,648	Yes	Yes	
So. Carolina	1989	Custom	84(1989)		NTE,Custom				Yes	Yes
So. Dakota	1990	Misc		–						
Tennessee	1990	PPST		169,169,172	NTE		644,647,639	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas	1990	PPST,Custom	80(1989)		Custom	89(1988-89)			Yes	Yes
Utah	1990	Misc			–					
Vermont	1990	–			–					
Virginia	1990	–			NTE		639,649,639	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington	1990	SAT,ACT,Custom			–					
W. Virginia	1990	PPST		172,172,171	Custom		140			Yes
Wisconsin	1990	PPST			–					
Wyoming	1990	CAT		70%ile	–					
Totals		27			36			26	25	24

[1] ACT=the American College Testing Program; CAT=California Achievement Test; C-BASE=the College Basic Academic Subject Examination; CBEST=California Basic Education Skills Test; COMP=College Outcomes Measures Project; CTBS=California Test of Basic Skills; NTE=NTE Program; PPST=Pre-Professional Skills Test; SAT=Scholastic Aptitude Test; –=not applicable.

[2] Passing rates may be cumulative, per administration, for the first attempt, or for the most difficult subtest.

[3] Passing scores for the PPST are for the reading, mathematics, and writing portions, respectively. Passing scores for the NTE are for the general knowledge, communication skills, and professional knowledge portions, respectively.

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